



Caribbean University of Aruba confirms the restoration of “Blauwe Steeg”

President of the Board Of the Caribbean University of Aruba, Drs. Frank Zaandam, announced to the press and public on Thursday that the “Blauwe Steeg” or “Blue Alley” for which he and others have been working so long to establish, will now finally open the first of September.

“Blauwe Steeg” is a project that has been on the drawing boards for over two years, and Drs. Zaandam, along with his associates Ingrid Kuiperdal and Richard Frank were very pleased that they could announce that the hard work of the past years has reached fruition.

“The Blue Alley” is an area of historic buildings in the heart of Oranjestad, not far from the courthouse. The most prominent is “Flor di Oriente” a quaint rum shop that was the meeting place of the Portuguese community of Aruba more than one hundred years ago. It is still popular with islanders today, but along with five buildings surrounding it is in state of disrepair. It is the plan for the Blue Alley that “Flor di Oriente” and the other buildings be restored to their original condition, and architect Bert Kamsteeg, who is quite expert at restoration, has been contracted to handle the project.

Aside from a new home for the Caribbean University of Aruba, it is the intention of the Blue Alley Foundation to make the area a center for the arts, with “Flor di Oriente” still serving its purpose as a charming café and restaurant. The other buildings will function as an auditorium for concerts and theatrical performances and an art gallery to display the works of Aruba’s talented artists, aside from classrooms for the university. It is their intention to see the area become an attractive hub of cultural activity, attracting both island residents and visitors to enjoy this bit of local color and history.

Drs. Zaandam and others involved in this project had attempted to have it funded by a grant from Holland and the European Union, but local banks and sponsors have supported them in the plan to restore this area and revive interest in Aruba’s landmark buildings.

September 1 will see the conversion of the area to the use of the various plans of “Blue Alley” but Drs. Zaandam announced that the physical restoration will be a slow process, completed in phases. He expressed that “ It is an ambitious project that, and when completed, will contribute greatly to the refinement of the island, a restoration of its ethnicity, and, they hope, perhaps the start of many more projects to reclaim more of Aruba’s historic structures for practical use.”